

4.5 meters thick and 8.5 meters high. On either side of the wall was a strip of land called the *pomerium*, originally a line made by a plow drawn by a bull and a cow to demarcate the religious boundaries of the city. An army could not cross the *pomerium* into the city except in triumph; consequently Roman soldiers mustered outside the city, on the Campus Martius, or Field of Mars.

CHAPTER 5

Tarquin's Coup d'État and the End of the Monarchy

Lucius Tarquin, son of the first Tarquin, Tarquinius Priscus, wanted to be king himself, and not just King Servius' son-in-law. He began spreading malicious rumors about Servius, no doubt concerning Servius' lowly birth. Tullia, the king's daughter who had married Tarquin's brother Arruns, was as ambitious as her brother-in-law Tarquin; she thought her own husband, Arruns, was a wimp. To facilitate their evil plans, Tarquin killed his wife (Tullia's sister), and Tullia killed her husband Arruns. Tarquin and Tullia then got married and were able to plot against the king in secrecy.

After securing the support of the leading families by offering bribes, Tarquin made his move. He sat down in the king's chair in the Senate House and ordered the senators to come to King Tarquin. They dared not stay away, fearing reprisals. Upon their arrival, Tarquin vilified the king and his rise to the throne. When Servius heard what was happening, he hurried to the Senate House.

"Tarquin," he cried, "what is this? What recklessness has caused you to dare to summon the senators and sit in my chair while I, the king, am still alive?" (Livy I.47).

Tarquin then defiantly responded that he was simply keeping his father's chair, and that it was much better for a king's son, rather than a slave, to inherit the kingdom; the time had come for an end to Servius' boundless mockery and insults to his masters.

With some people in the crowd shouting support for Tarquin, others for Servius, Tarquin seized the aged Servius and threw him down the steps into the street. Tarquin's assassins then killed the

king. Tullia, Tarquin's wife and Servius' daughter, later drove up in a carriage and was the first to salute her husband as king; while driving away, she ran over her father's bloody, mutilated body, which was lying in the street. Servius Tullius had been king for forty-four years.

TARQUIN THE PROUD

In this way Tarquinius Superbus (as he soon came to be called, for *superbus* means "proud, arrogant") began his rule, which left the Romans with a bitter hatred for monarchy. Breaking with tradition, he sought neither election to the throne by the people nor the Senate's approval of his power. He refused a burial for his father-in-law, and even made a joke of it, saying that Romulus had not been buried either. He executed the senators who had supported Servius and did not fill the vacant seats, thinking that the senators would be intimidated by their dwindling numbers. He did not consult the Senate, as previous kings had done, but ruled instead by his own power and authority, making whatever decisions he thought best. He employed a bodyguard, fearing that someone else might follow the precedent that he himself had set. He even seized the property of wealthy citizens.

Tarquin made great efforts to win the support of the Latins, Rome's neighbors to the south and southwest, in the event he should ever need outside help against his Roman subjects. Yet he treated some Latins as arrogantly as he treated the Romans. For example, Turnus, a Latin noble, recognized that Tarquin was aiming to take over Latium and told his Latin friends of Tarquin's plans. When Tarquin learned that Turnus was not well disposed toward him, he bribed Turnus' slaves to hide a large supply of weapons in Turnus' house; summoning the Latin nobles, Tarquin told them of Turnus' plot to assassinate him and to make himself king over them all. The king and the nobles entered Turnus' house and, of course, found there a large supply of weapons, which was "proof" of Turnus' plot. Turnus was then executed.

Tarquin did do a few good things for Rome. He may have built the Temple of Jupiter on the Capitol, although the credit may be due his father. He also built Rome's main sewer, the *cloaca maxima*.

One day a snake was seen slithering down a wooden pillar in the palace. Tarquin was so alarmed about this that he sent his sons to Delphi, to consult the oracle of Apollo (usually the Romans sought oracles from the Etruscans). Accompanying Tarquin's sons to Delphi was Brutus, the son of the king's sister.

Brutus had seen the king's ruthlessness, and he understood the danger of his own situation. He had concluded that he could survive only by appearing to pose no threat to the king; he therefore pretended to be stupid (his name means "dull") and made no protest when Tarquin seized his property or executed leading citizens. He was sent to Delphi with the king's sons to serve as the butt of their jokes. Brutus brought his own offering to Apollo, a gift resembling the giver: a rod of gold hidden inside a tube of wood.

At Delphi, the oracle of Apollo answered the questions asked by Tarquin's sons, as well as one they asked on their own behalf: who would be the next king of Rome? The oracle responded that the first among them to kiss his mother would have supreme authority in Rome. Tarquin's sons therefore drew lots to decide who would first kiss their mother when they arrived at Rome. As they were leaving the temple, however, Brutus pretended to trip and, while lying on the ground, kissed the Earth, the mother of all living things.

THE RAPE OF LUCRETIA

Immediately upon returning to Rome, the three young men had to hurry to Ardea, a town to which the Romans had laid siege. Soon the action in the war slowed down, and many officers were allowed to spend their time in leisure.

One night a party was held, and among those attending were Sextus Tarquinius (one of the king's sons) and a man named Collatinus. The topic of the conversation turned to their wives; each man praised his own, and they began to argue over whose wife was the most faithful. Finally, Collatinus proposed that they all return to Rome to see just what their wives were doing—that way they could decide whose wife was the most faithful. All agreed.

To one house after another they went, seeing their wives throwing parties with many guests and sumptuous food. The last wife they visited was Lucretia, the wife of Collatinus. When they

came to Collatinus' house, they found Lucretia spinning wool, by lamplight, with her maidservants at her side. Without a doubt, Lucretia had won the "most faithful wife" contest. She invited the men inside for supper, and in the course of the evening Sextus Tarquinius fell madly in love with her. The men then returned to the war in Ardea.

A few days later, Sextus Tarquinius rode back to Rome (without Collatinus' knowledge) and appeared before Lucretia. She treated him as the honored guest that he was, and gave him the guest chamber to sleep in. During the night, when all was quiet, he stole into Lucretia's room.

"Lucretia," he said, "be quiet! I am Sextus Tarquinius. There is a sword in my hand. If you say anything at all, you will die." He then told her of his love, begging, pleading, and even threatening her, so she would submit to his desire. She refused. Seeing that she would not relent and that her fidelity was greater even than her fear of death, he threatened to kill her and then to cut the throat of a slave and lay his naked body next to hers, so that people would say that Lucretia had been justly killed after being caught in the most disgraceful adultery. Fearing for her good reputation, she submitted to his desires. After using her, he rode away.

Lucretia then wrote to her father and to her husband, urging them to return to Rome immediately, each with a trustworthy friend, for a terrible thing had happened. They came, bringing Publius Valerius and Brutus.

They found Lucretia sitting in her room, very sad. When they entered, she began to cry. Her husband asked, "Is everything all right?" She answered, "No. How can anything be all right for a woman who has lost her honor? Collatinus, another man has been in your bed; otherwise only my body has been violated, for my mind is innocent. My death will be my proof. But give your right hands in an oath that the adulterer will be avenged. Sextus Tarquinius is the one who last night, as an enemy armed for violence, but disguised as a guest, got his pleasure from me, but if you are real men, you will make him pay for that pleasure. You will see to it that he receives what he deserves. I recognize that although I am not guilty of wrongdoing, I am not free from punishment; no woman will ever live unchastely with Lucretia as her guide."

With a knife, which she had hidden under her dress, Lucretia then stabbed herself in the chest, and fell forward, dead. (Livy I.58.7-12)

Lucretia's father and husband were overwhelmed with grief. While they stood weeping helplessly, Brutus drew the bloody knife from Lucretia's body and holding it before him cried: "I swear by this blood—most chaste until the prince's crime—and gods, I call upon you as witness that I, with as much force as I can muster, will drive Lucius Tarquinius the Proud, with his wicked wife and the whole stock of his children, out of Rome, and I will not allow them or any other man to be king in Rome!" (Livy I.59.1-2).

Lucretia's father and husband, shocked by Brutus' sudden transformation into a man of action, swore the same oath and carried Lucretia's body into the Forum. The public's anger, stirred by the grief of the father and husband weeping before their eyes, the sight of the bloody and dead Lucretia, and Brutus' words reminding them of Tarquin's usurpation of power and tyrannical rule, inspired them to take up arms against the king and to drive monarchy from Rome. Tarquin, who was still besieging Ardea, found Rome's gates closed to him when he returned to the city. Tarquin had ruled for twenty-five years. Monarchy in Rome ended in 509 B.C., and the *res publica*, the Roman republic, was born.

made of cornelwood and hollowed out to receive it, a riddling symbol of his own character. When they arrived and had carried out their father's instructions, the two Tarquins conceived the desire to ask which of them would succeed their father as king of Rome. From the inmost recess of the sanctuary this response is said to have issued: 'Whoever of you, my lads, first brings a kiss to his mother shall hold supreme power at Rome.' The Tarquins gave orders that no one say anything about this: they intended to keep their brother Sextus back in Rome in the dark and to eliminate him as a possible successor. Between them they agreed to draw lots to determine which, on reaching Rome, would be the first to kiss his mother. But Brutus thought the Pythia's words meant something quite different. Pretending to slip, he fell to the ground and pressed his lips to the earth, the mother of us all.

Upon returning to Rome they found that preparations for war against the Rutuli were in full swing. 57. These people inhabited the city of Ardea and were very wealthy for that time and place. Their wealth was the cause of the war: Tarquin wanted to enrich himself, now that his resources were exhausted from his many public works, and to mollify the plebeians with Ardea's plunder, for they disliked his rule both because of his general arrogance and because of their resentment at having been kept so long at work fit for ordinary workmen and slaves. Tarquin tried to take Ardea in an initial assault, but when this did not succeed, he fell back on blockading the city from behind siegeworks.

A permanent camp grew up and, as happens in a war that is long but not hard-fought, furloughs were freely granted, but more for the officers than for the rank and file. Now the young princes of the royal house were in the habit of spending their free time feasting and carousing among themselves. It so happened that when they were drinking in the quarters of Sextus Tarquinius, where Tarquinius Collatinus, the son of Egerius, was one of the guests, they fell to discussing their wives. Each man praised his own extravagantly. When the dispute heated up, Collatinus said there was no need of talk. Why, in a few hours they could see for themselves that his Lucretia was the best of the lot. 'We're young and red-blooded. Why don't we ride off and see with our own eyes just what sort of wives we've got? The surest proof will be what each man finds when he shows up unexpectedly.' By this time they were quite drunk.

'Well then, let's go!' Spurring their horses they flew off to Rome.

The evening shadows were lengthening when they came upon the royal princesses feasting and frolicking with their friends. Then they sped off to Collatia: though the evening was late, they found Lucretia still in the main hall of her home, bent over her spinning and surrounded by her maids as they worked by lamplight. Lucretia was the clear winner of the contest. She graciously welcomed her husband and the Tarquins as they approached; Collatinus, happy in his victory, issued a comradely invitation for the royal young men to come in. When Sextus Tarquin set eyes upon her he was seized by the evil desire to debauch her, spurred on as he was by her beauty and redoubtable chastity. In the meantime, with the youthful lark now at an end, they returned to camp.

58. After a few days Sextus Tarquin, without Collatinus' knowledge, came to Collatia with a single companion. He was graciously welcomed, for no one suspected what he was up to, and after dinner was shown to a guest room. When the household was safely asleep, in the heat of passion he came to the sleeping Lucretia sword in hand and, pressing his left hand on her breast, whispered, 'Say no word, Lucretia. I am Sextus Tarquin. There is a sword in my hand. You die if you make a sound.' She awoke in fright, and when she realized she could not call for help with the threat of death hanging over her, Tarquin confessed his passion, pleaded with her, intermingling threats with entreaties and working in every way upon her feelings as a woman. When he saw she was resolute and would not yield even out of fear for her life, he threatened to disgrace her even in death by placing the naked body of a murdered slave next to her corpse, evidence that she had been killed in the act of committing adultery of the basest sort. When by this threat his lust vanquished her resolute chastity, he left the house exulting in his seeming conquest of the woman's honour.

Lucretia, stricken to the heart at the disgrace, sent the same messenger to her father in Rome and husband in Ardea: each was to come with one trustworthy friend; it must be done this way and done quickly: a terrible thing had happened. Spurius Lucretius arrived with Publius Valerius son of Volesus, Collatinus with Lucius Iunius Brutus, in whose company he was travelling *en route* to Rome when his wife's messenger chanced to meet him. They found Lucretia

seated downcast in her bedchamber. At the arrival of her father and husband tears welled up, and when her husband asked, 'Are you all right?', she replied, 'Indeed, no. What can be right when a woman's virtue has been taken from her? The impress of another man is in your bed, Collatinus; yet only my body was defiled; my soul is not guilty. Death will be my witness to this. But pledge with your right hands and swear that the adulterer will not go unpunished. Sextus Tarquin did this, a guest who betrayed his host, an enemy in arms who last night took his pleasure, fatal, alas, to me—and, if you act as you should, to him.' Each pledged his word in turn and tried to comfort the heartsick woman by fixing the guilt not upon the victim but the transgressor: the mind sins, they said, not the body, and there is no guilt when intent is absent. 'It is up to you', she said, 'to punish the man as he deserves. As for me, I absolve myself of wrong, but not from punishment. Let no unchaste woman hereafter continue to live because of the precedent of Lucretia.' She took a knife she was hiding in her garments and drove it into her breast. Doubling over, she collapsed in death.

Husband and father raised a ritual cry of mourning for the dead. 59. While they were taken up with lamentation, Brutus pulled the knife dripping with blood from Lucretia's body. Holding it before him he cried, 'By this blood, so pure before defilement by prince Tarquin, I hereby swear—and you, O deities, I make my witnesses—that I will drive out Lucius Tarquinius Superbus together with his criminal wife and all his progeny with sword, fire, and whatever force I can muster, nor will I allow them or anyone else to be king at Rome.' He then handed the dagger to Collatinus, and next to Lucretius and Valerius, who stood amazed at the miraculous change that had come over him. They repeated the oath after him; from that moment on, anger overmastering grief, they followed Brutus' lead in bringing the monarchy to an end.

They bore Lucretia's body from the house to the forum, where they drew a large crowd that was scandalized by the extraordinary turn of events, as anyone would be. Each man expressed his personal sense of outrage at the rape the prince had committed. And not just the father's grief moved them, but Brutus also, when he rebuked them for tears and useless complaints when what they should be doing as men and Romans was to take up arms against those who had dared such violence. The most spirited young men were quick

to seize weapons and join the cause; the rest followed their lead. Then, leaving a garrison at Collatia's gates to prevent anyone from getting out and reporting the uprising to the royal family, Brutus led the rest of the warriors to Rome.

The arrival of a large group of armed men caused fear and commotion wherever it went; on the other hand, the sight of the nation's leaders at the forefront made people think that whatever was afoot there must be a good reason for it. Moreover, men were as appalled by Sextus' heinous deed at Rome as they had been at Collatia. From all quarters of the city people crowded into the forum, where a herald summoned them to assemble before the tribune of the Celeres, or king's bodyguard, a post that Brutus chanced to be holding at that moment. He then delivered a speech that was wholly at odds with the spirit and character he had pretended to have up to that day. He spoke of the violence and lust of Sextus Tarquin, of the unspeakable rape of Lucretia and her wretched death, of the bereavement of Lucretius Tricipitinus and the cause of his daughter's death, which for him was more unworthy and more pitiable than the death itself. He mentioned also the arrogance of the king himself and how the plebs had been forced underground to dig out trenches and sewers: the men of Rome, victorious over all their neighbours, had been turned into drudges and quarry slaves, warriors no longer. He recalled the appalling murder of King Servius Tullius and how his daughter had driven over her father's body in that accursed wagon, and he invoked her ancestral gods as avengers. After saying these things and, I am sure, even more shocking ones prompted by his outrage of the moment, which are not easy for writers to capture on paper, he brought his listeners to such a pitch of fury that they revoked the king's power and ordered the exile of Lucius Tarquinius, together with wife and children.

Brutus armed a group of select young volunteers and with them set out for Ardea to rouse the army against the king. He left Lucretius in control of Rome, whom Tarquin had appointed prefect of the city some time before. In the midst of the tumult Tullia fled from her home. Wherever she went men and women reviled her, calling down on her head the vengeance that the spirits of kindred inflict upon those who have wronged them.

60. When the news of these events reached the camp, the king in fear at the sudden crisis hastened to Rome to suppress the distur-

bance. Brutus anticipated that he would be on his way and, not wanting to meet up with him, took a different route: at almost the same moment Brutus arrived at Ardea and Tarquin in Rome. The gates were closed to Tarquin and his exile proclaimed. The liberator of the city received a delighted welcome in the camp; and the king's sons were expelled from it. Two of them accompanied their father into exile at Caere among the Etruscans. Sextus Tarquin went to Gabii, apparently regarding it as his personal fiefdom; but there he was killed by those who had witnessed his murders and depredations and were bent on settling old scores.

Lucius Tarquinius Superbus reigned for twenty-five years. The monarchy at Rome from her foundation to her liberation lasted two hundred and forty-four years. Two consuls were then elected, in accordance with the precepts laid down by Servius Tullius, by the Comitia Centuriata under the presidency of the prefect of the city. They were Lucius Iunius Brutus and Lucius Tarquinius Collatinus.

BOOK TWO

free

1. The history of a free nation in peace and war will be my theme from this point on, the election of annual magistrates and greater obedience to the commands of law than to those of men. The arrogance of the last king caused the advent of liberty to be all the more welcome, whereas the rule of the earlier monarchs was such that they are deservedly reckoned successive founders of at least those parts of the city that they annexed to accommodate the new peoples each had added to the state. ~~Not is there any doubt that the same Brutus, who won so much glory in expelling Superbus, would have done a grievous wrong to the state if out of a premature desire for liberty he had wrested rule from one of the earlier kings. The plebs were a mixture of shepherds and adventurers who had fled their own lands. What would have happened to them when they won immunity if not liberty under the sacred protection of asylum? Uncowed by the absolute power of a king, they would have been stirred up by tribunician agitation and would have begun battling with the senators in a city not their own, before they had become united in spirit by commitment to wives and children and by love for the soil—a love that takes a long time to develop. The nation, not yet grown up, would have been torn apart by dissension. But as it was, a calm and moderate exercise of governmental authority fostered and nourished it so that when it matured and grew strong it was able to enjoy the excellent fruits of liberty.~~

One might more correctly say that the birth of liberty was owing to the annual nature of the consuls' tenure than to any lessening of the power the kings had possessed. The first consuls enjoyed all the rights and insignia of the highest office: they were only forbidden to hold the fasces* at the same time, lest double intimidation of the people should appear to be their aim. By agreement with his colleague Brutus was the first to hold the fasces, and he proved thereafter to be as keen a guardian of liberty as he had been its initial champion. First of all, while the people were in the first flush of enthusiasm for liberty, and to obviate their possibly succumbing to the entreaties or bribes of princes in the future, he had them swear an oath that they would allow no man to be king at Rome. Next, he

even boys

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